

## An Evaluation of IEP Transition Components and Post-School Outcomes in Two States

By Robert B. Steele, Moira Konrad, and David W. Test, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

### Abstract

*This study examined the quality of transition components of the IEPs of 28 high school graduates with disabilities, their projected postsecondary outcomes and levels of satisfaction with these outcomes, and the correspondence between projected and actual outcomes. Results indicated that, although the quality of the transition components was not exemplary, some of the outcomes for the students were quite positive. Examination of correspondence between the projected and actual outcomes showed that the greatest number of matches was in the area of employment. Results suggest that a comprehensive transition program is a critical ingredient for fostering post-school success.*

The “ultimate test” of any effective high school transition program is the progress and success achieved by its graduates (McAfee & Greenawalt, 2001). Recent studies document that post-school outcomes for students with disabilities are improving (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996); however, outcomes for students with disabilities continue to lag behind those of graduates without disabilities. For example, employment rates and levels of educational attainment among school exiters with disabilities remain lower than youth in the general population (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Therefore, most researchers and educators still consider the current outcomes of special education graduates as unacceptable (Baer et al., 2003; Colley & Jamison, 1998).

In an effort to improve post-school outcomes, the field has been working to identify factors that are associated with improved post-school outcomes for high-school exiters with disabilities. These predictors include employment during high school (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Colley & Jamison, 1998; Rabren, Dunn, & Chambers, 2002; Sample, 1998), and participation in vocational education or a work-study program (Baer et al., 2003). Baer et al. also identified participation in regular academics as a predictor of participation in postsecondary education. Participants who completed academic classes in general education settings were more likely to report those classes as helpful in preparing them for college-level coursework. Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, and Benz (1995) also examined predictors of participa-

tion in postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities. One predictor they identified was student participation in transition planning.

The intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has been to ensure that all students with disabilities receive meaningful transition services. The transition component of the individualized education program (IEP) has been identified as the “cornerstone” of the transition planning process (Grigal, Test, Beattie, & Wood, 1997; Halpern et al., 1995; McAfee & Greenawalt, 2001) and has been included in special education legislation since the passage of IDEA in 1990. As such, well developed transition components should translate into positive post-school outcomes for students exiting special education programs. Without comprehensive, high-quality transition components, students with disabilities may be less likely to enjoy access to and full participation in postsecondary options, including education, employment, community (recreation/leisure) participation, and independent living options.

The appropriateness of the IEP and the transition component may be the most important aspect addressed under the law. Incomplete plans are considered inappropriate and out of compliance with IDEA (McAfee & Greenawalt, 2001). In addition, researchers have examined the quality of transition components in an effort to determine if they are in compliance with IDEA’s mandates and if they reflect current best practices in the field (deFur, Getzel, & Kregal., 1994; Everson, Zhang, & Guillory, 2001; Grigal et al., 1997; Lawson

& Everson, 1994; Shearin, Roessler, & Schriner, 1999).

For example, Grigal et al. (1997) examined the transition components of 94 high school students. Findings indicated that the quality of transition components was consistent across disability groups, and the components were in compliance with IDEA. However, the transition components did not include clear statements about post-school outcomes, designation of personnel responsible for implementing transition activities, specific timelines, or best practices.

Although the quality of the transition components of IEPs has been studied, and post-school outcomes for students with disabilities have been investigated, correspondence between post-school-outcome goals identified in transition components and actual post-school outcomes has not been clearly documented. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the quality and quantity of information found in the transition components of the IEPs of high school graduates (exiters) with mild to moderate disabilities, their projected postsecondary outcomes and levels of satisfaction with these outcomes, and the correspondence between projected and actual outcomes. Three research questions were addressed: (a) What information is included in the transition component of participating students' IEPs, and how clearly and specifically written were the students' transition goals and objectives in the areas of employment, independent living, education, and community participation? (b) What are the post-school outcomes in the areas of employment, independent living, education, and community participation for the same group of students, and to what extent

are the exited students satisfied with these outcomes? and (c) How well do the post-school goals stated in the transition components match the post-school outcomes of the students in the areas of employment, independent living, education, and community participation?

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 28 students (16 males and 12 females) who graduated or exited with a formal school completion document in the spring of 2002 from one of two high schools in two different states. Participants did not include students who had dropped out of school. The two sites were identified as model transition sites because they had been recognized by their states as exemplary programs and were nominated by university faculty members who specialize in transition. In addition, both sites were interested in participating in order to receive technical assistance to improve the quality of their transition services. Table 1 shows how the programs and services provided by each school align with Kohler's (1996) Taxonomy for Transition Programming. All 28 students were identified with mild or moderate disabilities (i.e., learning disabilities, behavioral/emotional disabilities, or mild or moderate mental retardation) and had IEPs at the time of their exit from high school. Their ages at the time of exit ranged from 17 to 20 with a mean of 18.4. Fifty-two exiters were telephoned to participate in the follow-along survey. Twenty-eight individuals completed the telephone survey for a response rate of 54%.

### Instrumentation and Data Collection

Transition components. Transition components of the IEPs were evaluated using a protocol developed by Lawson and Everson (1994) and later modified by Grigal et al. (1997) to evaluate the quality of written transition goals and to examine how transition personnel and timelines were designated. For the present study, we modified the Grigal et al. version of the protocol as follows:

1. We excluded items that asked about information not available in the IEPs we received from the sites. Some of the information excluded was how long the IEP had been in effect, standardized test scores, and disability category.
2. We changed how post-school outcome goals were scored (3 = strong [very clear and specific, i.e., names specific job, environment, etc.]; 2 = average [somewhat clear and specific]; 1 = weak [unclear and not specific]; 0 = non-existent [no goal present]).
3. We added items to evaluate presence and quality of IEP goals to support postsecondary outcome goals (2 = direct support; 1 = indirect support; 0 = no support).
4. In the area of leisure/recreation, we added "community participation," given that this area was not included in the protocol used to evaluate the transition components, but was included in the components themselves.

The revised instrument consisted of 20 questions organized into the same four sections included in the Grigal et al. version: demographics, format, compliance with IDEA's mandates, and reflection of best practices.

Post-school surveys. Each of the two sites used a different survey to collect post-school out-

**Table 1**  
**Components of Participating Programs**

Areas of Kohler's (1996) Taxonomy	Site 1	Site 2
<i>Student Focused Planning</i>		
IEP Development/Content	Students formally choose their course of study; IEPs incorporate community outcome goals	Student's vision statements are incorporated into first page of IEP
Student Participation in IEP Process	Students encouraged to initiate own goals, objectives, and service plans	Students initiate own goals for post-school living
Planning Strategies	<i>ChoiceMaker Instructional Series</i> (Marshall, Martin, Maxson, & Jerman, 1997; Martin, Marshall, Maxson, & Jerman, 1997)	Students complete a vision planning survey and transition needs survey in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade. Students lead group-planning process
<i>Student Development</i>		
Life Skills Instruction	Statewide occupational diploma includes daily living skills and functional academics	Community and classroom instruction incorporate independent living and self-advocacy skills
Employment Skills Instruction/ Structured Work Experience	Statewide functional curriculum includes work skill-training beginning in 7 <sup>th</sup> grade, off-campus job shadowing, and training in community businesses	Job coaches support students in community-based instruction (CBI) sites; paid job training and vocational career training also available
Career and Vocational Curricula	School-based work experiences emphasize work habits, work personality, and job related skills; a service-learning program promotes volunteerism, and citizenship	<i>Teachers use Next S.T.E.P.</i> (Halpern et al., 1997) and <i>Whose Future is it Anyway?</i> (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995); courses tilted "Life Choices" and "On Your Own" are available as electives
Assessment	Uses standardized tests, portfolio and situational assessments, and vocational evaluations; <i>ChoiceMaker Instructional Series</i> (Marshall et al., 1997; Martin et al., 1997) is used to guide students to design individualized goals	Uses student/parent surveys, CBI experiences, work skills checklists, student profiles, in-school work sites, community-based vocational tryouts, and portfolios; formal evaluations are available through a cooperative Voc. Ed./ Sped. program
Self-determination*	Self-advocacy and self-determination are supported through an advocacy group of students who train other students to lead their own IEP meetings	<i>Next S.T.E.P.</i> (Halpern et al., 1997) and <i>Whose Future is it Anyway?</i> (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995) are incorporated into the curriculum
Support Services	Functional curriculum has been developed for drivers' education; a vehicle has been modified for students with disabilities	Students with significant disabilities can participate in a supported job training program for 18-21 year olds.

**Table 1**  
**Components of Participating Programs (cont.)**

Areas of Kohler's (1996) Taxonomy	Site 1	Site 2
<i>Interagency Collaboration</i>		
Collaborative Framework	There are community-, school-, and individual-level teams comprised of members representing government funded community agencies and private, non-profit service provider agencies	Community-level partnerships with local businesses, VR and MR/DD agency representation, supported employment services
Collaborative Service Delivery	VR and LEA's provide joint funding of job coaches to help students gain paid employment	State VR funding provides job coaches; schools and VR provide job placement services
<i>Program Structure</i>		
Program Philosophy and Policy	The school system believes all students can succeed in life, work, and community; "Visions of Success" theme drives transition programming	Related services are fully committed to providing community-based services
Program Evaluation	Follow-up data are collected one year after exit	Follow-up data are collected one year after exit
Strategic Planning/Quality Improvement	Post-school outcome data are provided to transition and special education program staff	Post-school outcomes are used for on-going feedback
Resource Allocation	The system and staff are committed to ensuring each student receives appropriate transition services	Job coaches and community-based work-study coordinators are provided by the school system
Human Resource Development	State and local trainings are offered	State and local trainings are offered by staff in conjunction with state parent training group
<i>Family Involvement</i>		
Family Training on Transition-Related Topics	Annual training is provided by the system and through the annual state transition conference	Training is provided by the school, VR, and MH/DD; a state coalition for the education of children with disabilities also provides training
Family Involvement Throughout Transition	A transition information meeting is held each Fall to inform parents and to discuss transition issues	Parent input is obtained through transition questionnaires and open houses
Family Empowerment	At the beginning of each school year, special education staff provide training to parents of 8 <sup>th</sup> graders on choosing a course of study	A state coalition for the education of children with disabilities provides statewide training

\*Self-determination is not an area specifically designated in Kohler's Taxonomy.

come data. Site 1 used a state-developed survey with 20 items to collect data in three areas: (a) consumer satisfaction with high-school experiences, (b) post-school outcomes, and (c) consumer satisfaction with post-school experiences. Site 2 used a locally developed survey that had 12 items, which included questions about (a) participation in high school activities, (b) post-school outcomes, and (c) consumer satisfaction with post-school experiences. Although both surveys contained satisfaction items, the scoring categories differed slightly. Therefore, we needed to make adjustments to compare results from both sites. For example, we determined that the "much" satisfaction category on one survey was equivalent to the "very satisfied" category on the other survey. In addition, the wording of the questions varied between the two surveys, so we identified those that were similar enough to be comparable. For example, "How satisfied are you with your friends?" was determined to be comparable to "How satisfied are you with your current contact with friends?"

Both sites collected post-school outcome data via telephone interviews 12-15 months after students exited. Paraprofessional job coaches conducted the interviews for Site 1, and a student assistant was hired to conduct the interviews for Site 2. Three telephone attempts were made with each student.

**Interrater reliability.** The first and second author jointly scored one randomly selected IEP and its transition component from each site in order to establish common scoring procedures for using the scoring protocol. Then, each scorer independently scored IEPs/transition components from one state. After this, the scorers met again

and examined the scoring of another randomly selected IEP/transition component from each site. Discrepancies and disagreements were discussed and modifications were made to the scoring procedures. Then, each scorer rescored each of the IEPs/transition components. In order to ensure reliability of data collected, 6 of the 28 transition components (21%), 3 from each state, were randomly selected and scored/coded by the first and second authors. A point-by-point analysis was conducted. To determine reliability, the number of agreements was divided by the number of agreements plus disagreements and multiplied by 100. Reliability ranged from 91% to 98%, with a mean of 95%.

## Data Analysis

**Transition components.** For compliance with IDEA's mandates, we determined percentages of transition components that included the 15 outcome areas reflecting best practices. In addition, we determined who was present at IEP meetings and who was designated responsible for action steps by calculating frequencies and percentages. After we evaluated the post-school outcome goals using the 0-3 scale, we calculated how many and what percentage of transition components fell into each evaluation criterion (i.e., none present, weak, average, or strong) in the four post-school outcome areas. Finally, we examined the goals in the participants' IEPs to determine whether or not there were IEP goals written to support post-school outcomes. For this analysis, we evaluated whether there were goals that provided direct support, indirect support, or no support for each of the four broad outcome areas (i.e., employment, education/training, leisure/recreation/community

participation, and residential status). The IEP did not have to explicitly outline a post-school outcome in the transition component in order to have an IEP goal that supported that outcome area. For example, the transition component may not have listed a specific post-school outcome for postsecondary education, but there could have been an IEP goal that supported the student attending postsecondary education. We calculated frequencies and percentages for each of the four outcome areas.

**Post-school outcomes.** We compared the two surveys to determine which items were common to both and only analyzed those data. As a result, we did not use all survey items for analysis. We calculated frequencies and percentages for (a) whether the participant had a job at graduation; (b) how much and in what type of job the participant was currently working; (c) what type of postsecondary training the individual was participating in; (d) with whom the participant was living; (e) the participant's satisfaction with his/her job, living arrangements, and social situation; and (f) the number of leisure/recreation activities, not including watching television or listening to music, the participant engaged in (e.g., sports, hobbies, attending church).

**Correspondence between postsecondary outcome goals and actual outcomes.** Each individual's post-secondary outcome goals and actual postsecondary outcomes were directly compared to determine the correspondence between the post-school goals stated in the transition component of the IEP and the actual post-school outcomes of students in the areas of employment, education/training, leisure/recreation/community participation, and

**Table 2**  
**Outcome Areas**

Outcomes Areas Reflected in Transition Components	n	%
Independent living	26	93
Integrated employment	25	89
Community participation	18	64
Vocational training	12	42
Postsecondary education	9	32
Transportation	7	25
Financial	5	18
Advocacy/legal	4	14
Adult services	3	11
Living arrangements	3	11
Relationships	2	7
Leisure/recreation	1	4
Medical	1	4
Continuing adult education	0	0
Homemaking needs	0	0

residential status. In some cases, the individual's actual post-school outcome (in employment or education/training) was listed as "other." In these cases, the "other" indicated that the job or training outcome was not listed on the survey. In fact, "other" was one of the items on the survey. We assigned a score in each of these areas based on how well projected outcomes matched actual outcomes. Specifically, a score of "0" indicated that either (a) there was no match or (b) there was not a post-school outcome projection in that area. A "1" indicated either (a) there was a partial match (e.g., employment projection was that the individual

would work in food service; the outcome was the individual was working but in a different area) or (b) there was an uncertain match (e.g., outcome projection was too vague to know for certain that there was an exact match). Finally, a "2" was assigned if there was an exact match between the projected and actual outcome.

For recreation/leisure/community participation, scores were assigned differently because the surveys asked individuals to indicate how many activities they were involved in, as well as what those activities were. We evaluated correspondence by looking to see if any of the activities listed by the student matched what had been

projected in the transition component of the IEP. We used the activity that most closely matched the activity projected in the transition component to do the evaluation. We also calculated the number of activities each student was involved in.

## Results

Findings are presented in three parts. First, we provide the results of the evaluation of the transition components. Second, we describe the results of the post-school surveys. Finally, we present the correspondence between the projected and actual outcomes.

### Transition Components' Content and Quality

All 28 IEPs included transition components; however, the content and quality varied across the IEPs. Table 2 presents the outcome areas addressed in the transition components. Of these areas, independent living (93%) and integrated employment (89%) were present most often, whereas homemaking needs and continuing adult education were present least often (0%).

Table 3 shows who was present at the students' IEP/transition planning meetings, as well as who was designated responsible for carrying out actions outlined in the IEP. Special education teachers (96.4%) and school administrators (92.9%) were present most often. The next most likely people to attend the IEP meetings were parents/guardians (75.0%) and general education teachers (71.4%). Students attended 57.1% of the meetings. A majority of the transition components (67.9%) designated the student responsible for carrying out part of the IEP. Other team members who were likely to be designated responsible included special education teachers (60.7%), general education

**Table 3**  
**Members of IEP Teams and Persons Designated Responsible for Action Steps**

Team Member	Present at Meeting n (%)	Designated Responsible n (%)
Special education teacher	27 (96.4)	17 (60.7)
School administrator/LEA Rep	26 (92.9)	1 (3.6)
Parent/Guardian	21 (75.0)	6 (21.4)
Regular education teacher	20 (71.4)	12 (42.9)
Student	16 (57.1)	19 (67.9)
Guidance counselor	7 (25.0)	4 (14.3)
Transition specialist or community-based instructor	5 (17.9)	8 (28.5)
Vocational educator	4 (14.3)	7 (25.0)
Speech/language pathologist	3 (10.7)	3 (10.7)
Occupational therapist	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)
Advocate	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)
Aide	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)

**Table 4**  
**Evaluations of Post-School Outcome Goals**

Outcome Area	Strong		Average		Weak		None	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Employment (n=28)	4	14.3	17	60.7	4	14.3	3	10.7
Residential (n=28)	2	7.1	18	64.3	5	17.9	3	10.7
Recreation/Leisure (n=28)	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.6	27	14.3
Postsecondary education/training (n=28)	0	0.0	4	14.3	2	7.1	22	75.0

teachers (42.9%), transition specialists/community based instructors (28.5%), vocational educators (25.0%), and parents/guardians (21.4%).

In addition, we examined each IEP to determine whether

or not there was a statement that reflected the long-term vision/dreams of the family and/or student. A slight majority (53.6%) of the transition components included such a statement. We also evaluated the

quality of the post-school outcome goals in four specific areas: employment, residential, recreational/community participation, and postsecondary education. These ratings are presented in Table 4. In general,

**Table 5**  
**Presence of IEP Goals to Support Student Post-School Outcomes**

Outcome Area	No Support		Indirect Support		Direct Support	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Employment (n=28)	6	21.4	4	14.3	18	64.3
Residential (n=28)	15	53.6	11	39.3	2	7.1
Recreation/Leisure (n=28)	27	96.4	1	3.6	0	0.0
Postsecondary education/training (n=28)	21	75.0	4	14.3	3	10.7

outcome goals were “average” (i.e., somewhat clear and specific), if they were present at all. Employment (89.3%) and residential (89.3%) outcomes were most likely to be present. In terms of quality, 60.7% of the transition components had employment outcomes that were rated average, and 14.3% had employment outcomes rated as strong. For residential outcomes, 64.3% of the transition components had outcomes rated as average, and only 7.1% of the transition components had strongly written outcomes. For the other two areas (i.e., recreation/leisure and postsecondary education/training), the vast majority of the transition components did not include post-school outcome goals. For the area of recreation/leisure, 96.4% of the transition components did not include a post-school outcome, and for the one transition component that did include an outcome goal in this area, it was rated as weak. Findings were only slightly higher for postsecondary education outcome goals. Seventy-five percent of the transition components did not list an outcome in this area.

In addition to examining the presence and quality of post-school outcome goals, we also identified whether or not there

were IEP goals written to support post-school outcomes (see Table 5). The post-school outcome area of employment was most likely to have supporting IEP goals, with 64.3% of the IEPs having direct support and 14.3% having indirect support. In the other outcome areas, the IEPs did not fare as well, with fewer than half including IEP goals to support (either directly or indirectly) residential outcomes (46.4%), recreation/leisure outcomes (3.6%), or postsecondary education outcomes (25%).

#### **Post-School Outcomes**

Table 6 shows the participants' post-school outcomes in employment, postsecondary education/training, leisure/recreation/community participation, and residential living. Twenty-three (82.1%) of the 28 participants had a job at the time of their graduation from high school. At the time of the post-school interviews, 12 to 15 months after exiting school, 24 (85.7%) of the students were employed either part-time (35.7%) or full-time (50.0%). All participants who were working reported that they were satisfied with their jobs, with 57.1% indicating a high level of satisfaction.

The majority (53.6%) of the participants indicated that they were attending some type of

postsecondary education or training. The most common type of postsecondary education the participants were engaged in was 2-year college, with 8 of the participants (28.6% of the entire sample and 53.3% of those attending postsecondary education/training) attending 2-year colleges. Satisfaction data on the postsecondary school experience were not collected at both sites; therefore, satisfaction data are not reported.

All participants were engaged in some leisure activities. The number of activities ranged from 2 to 9 with a mean of 5. Although 82.1% of the participants indicated they watched television as a leisure activity, we did not include this or listening to music in our frequency counts, as these are passive activities rather than active ones. In terms of satisfaction with their social situations, the vast majority (92.9%) were satisfied with 64.3% indicating a high level of satisfaction.

Twenty-one (75.0%) of the participants indicated that they lived with their parents or other family members. Three (10.7%) lived with a spouse. Two (7.1%) lived with friends, and two (7.1%) lived alone. Twenty-seven (96.4%) of the participants reported that they were

satisfied with their current living arrangements, with 60.7% indicating a high level of satisfaction.

### **Correspondence between Projected and Actual Post-School Outcomes**

Table 6 shows the correspondence between the projected outcomes and the actual outcomes and provides the ratings, which evaluate the extent to which a match existed. In the area of postsecondary employment, 23 (82.1%) had some level of match. Specifically, 6 (21.4%) of the participants had exact matches between their projected employment outcomes and their actual employment outcomes, whereas, 17 (60.7%) had partial matches. Five (17.9%) had no matches.

In the area of education and training, 3 (10.7%) of the participants had exact matches between their projected education/training outcomes and their actual education/training outcomes. Four (14.3%) had partial matches, and 21 (75.0%) had no matches.

In the area of leisure/recreation, which included community participation, none of the participants had exact matches between their projected leisure/recreation/community participation outcomes and their actual leisure/recreation/community participation outcomes. Ten (35.7%) had partial matches, and 18 (64.3%) had no matches.

Finally, in the area of residential living, 9 (32.1%) of the participants had exact matches between their projected residential outcomes and their actual residential outcomes. One (3.6%) had a partial match, and 18 (64.3%) had no matches.

### **Discussion**

Our findings indicate that although all 28 IEPs included transition components, the content and quality varied. More than half the transition components

included information in the areas of employment, independent living, and community participation. However, fewer than half the IEPs included statements about postsecondary education, vocational training, or leisure/recreation. These findings are consistent with those of Grigal et al. (1997), Everson et al. (2001), and Shearin et al. (1999). Next, our results indicated that the outcome areas of leisure/recreation and postsecondary education/training continue to be inadequately addressed in student IEPs (Grigal et al.). Finally, while 57% of students attended their IEP meetings, 68% of the IEPs designated the student as the person to carry out part of the IEP. It seems odd to designate responsibility to a person not in attendance at the meeting.

The present study extends the existing literature by including an examination of correspondence between the projected and actual outcomes. Our findings showed that the greatest number of matches was in the area of employment. In the other three areas, the majority of projected outcomes did not match actual outcomes. These findings may indicate that transition teams have gotten better at addressing postsecondary employment issues but still have much work to do in addressing outcomes in others areas.

Our findings indicated that although the quality of the transition components of the IEPs we examined was not exemplary, some of the outcomes for the students were quite positive in comparison to other studies. For example, the vast majority (85.7%) of the participants had a job 12 to 15 months after exiting school. This is a greater employment rate than reported in previous studies (e.g., Baer et al., 2003; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Colley &

Jamison, 1998). In addition, just over half the participants were attending some type of postsecondary education or training, and all were engaged in leisure activities. Most of the participants were living with their parents or other family members 12 to 15 months after exiting school. Unfortunately, these outcomes, whether exemplary or not, were not reflected in the transition components of the IEPs as 75% of the IEPs had no match for postsecondary education outcomes, and 64% of the IEPs had no match for leisure/recreation and residential outcomes.

Given that the IEP has been considered instrumental in providing educational programs and services, it would seem that well-developed IEPs would predict positive post-school outcomes. However, most students in our sample had post-school outcomes in employment and postsecondary education that were much better than those reported in other outcome studies (Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Lueking, & Mack, 2002; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). This finding begs the question, "Is it the IEP or the program that makes the difference?" Our sample of students was selected from sites that were identified as model transition programs. Test (2000) identified transition best practices as a coordinated program that enables students to practice and exercise as much self-determination as possible as well as provide a mechanism for evaluating post-school outcomes. Both schools participating in the study met Test's criteria by (a) providing a comprehensive and coordinated transition program that emphasized self-determination and aligned with Kohler's (1996) Taxonomy (see Table 1), and (b) evaluating their transition services and post-school outcomes. Another

**Table 6****Correspondence between Transition Component Outcome Goals and Actual Post-School Outcomes**

Student	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	Employment			Education/Training			Leisure/Recreation/Community			Residential		
				Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*
1	child care	child care	2	not present	none	0	not present	8 activities	0	independent	parents	0			
2	cosmetology or food service	food service	2	not present	other	0	not present	2 activities	0	independent	parents	0			
3	auto mech or food service	other	1	not present	none	0	not present	2 activities	0	independent	spouse	2			
4	factory or auto mech w/ support	none	0	not present	none	0	not present	6 activities	0	independent	parents	0			
5	food service	none	0	not present	none	0	not present	5 activities	0	independent	parents	0			
6	child care	food service	1	not present	none	0	not present	6 activities	0	independent	alone	2			
7	law enforcement	food service	1	college	2 yr coll	2	not present	7 activities	0	independent	parents	0			
8	office, child care, or food service	factory	1	not present	none	0	not present	6 activities	0	independent	spouse	2			

**Table 6, continued****Correspondence between Transition Component Outcome Goals and Actual Post-School Outcomes**

Student	Outcome Goal	Employment			Education/Training			Leisure/Recreation/Community			Residential		
		Outcome Actual	Match*	Goal	Outcome Actual	Match*	Goal	Outcome Actual	Match*	Goal	Actual	Match*	
9	mechanics, graphic art	factory	2	not present	none	0	not present	6 activities	0	independent	spouse	2	
10	competitive employment	cashier or sales	1	present	2 yr coll	0	not present	8 activities	0	independent	parents	0	
11	competitive employment	factory	1	present	2 yr coll	0	not present	4 activities	0	independent	parents	0	
12	surveyor	stock/bag	1	present	2 yr coll	0	not present	9 activities	0	independent	parents	0	
13	employment	factory	1	present	none	0	not present	4 activities	0	independent	parents	0	
14	electronics or auto mech	construct	1	present	none	0	not present	8 activities	0	independent	parents	0	
15	child care or food service	food service	2	present	none	0	not present	5 activities	0	independent	parents	0	
16	supported employment	other	1	not present	none	0	art/music	6 activities	1	parents	parents	2	
17	military	clerk/ military	2	college	2 yr coll	1	active citizen	4 activities	1	not present	parents	0	

**Table 6, continued****Correspondence between Transition Component Outcome Goals and Actual Post-School Outcomes**

Student	Outcome Goal	Employment			Education/Training			Leisure/Recreation/Community			Residential		
		Actual	Match*	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	
18	not present	food service	0	4 yr coll	4 yr coll	2	responsible citizen	4 activities	1	independent	alone	2	
19	career	janitorial	1	college	4 yr coll	1	responsible citizen	2 activities	1	independent	parents	0	
20	theater	food service	1	not present	2 yr coll	0	active citizen	3 activities	1	parents	parents	2	
21	supported employment grocery, zoo, theater	food service with support	1	not present	training-other	0	not present	5 activities	0	not present	parents	0	
	sports medicine	debt collector	1	college	2 yr coll	1	responsible citizen	6 activities	1	independent	friends	2	
22	employment music	nursing home aide	1	not present	training-other	0	active citizen	3 activities	1	parents	parents	2	
23	military	none	0	college	none	0	responsible citizen	5 activities	1	independent	parents	0	
24	teacher	child care	2	4 yr coll	4 yr coll	2	not present	5 activities	0	not present	friends	0	

**Table 6, continued****Correspondence between Transition Component Outcome Goals and Actual Post-School Outcomes**

Student	Employment			Education/Training			Leisure/Recreation/Community			Residential		
	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*	Outcome Goal	Actual	Match*
26 child care	cashier	1	college	none	0	not present	2 activities	0	independent	parents	0	
27 career	child care	1	college	2 yr coll	1	responsible citizen	5 activities	1	independent	parents	0	
28 video clerk	none	0	not present	training-other	0	community rec and leisure	4 activities	1	supported living	parents	1	supported living

\*0 = no match between outcome goal and actual outcome; 1 = partial match; 2 = exact match

way to look at this issue is to ask, "Does the IEP provide the plan for the services that are to be delivered?" In our study, we found that, perhaps with an exception in the area of employment, the answer to this question was "no."

Limitations of this study should be considered. First, the small sample size and the fact that students were not part of a randomly selected sample limit generalizability of our findings. Further, two different surveys were used limiting the number of variables available for comparisons from one site to another. Also, we had limited information about the students. For example, although we know that all students had mild or moderate disabilities, we did not have information about their specific disability labels. Further, although we knew that students completed high school, we did not know what exit documents (e.g., certificate, standard diploma) students earned. In addition, in this study, we examined students' IEPs rather than their actual in-school experiences. There may have been discrepancies between what was detailed in the IEP documents and the actual transition and high school experiences of the students. In fact, the participants in this study were participating in programs that provided services and activities that were not necessarily outlined in their IEPs.

Another limitation was that the correspondence between projected outcomes and actual outcomes in the area of leisure/recreation/community participation was difficult to determine. We attribute this difficulty to two factors. First, the IEPs did not call for transition teams to state explicitly what leisure and recreation activities the student would be involved in after leaving school. Instead, the IEPs

called for the teams to address "community experiences" at Site 1 and "community participation" at Site 2. On the other hand, the post-school surveys asked participants to indicate what activities they were involved in. Therefore, there was a mismatch between the in-school document (i.e., the IEP) and the post-school survey. Second, the projected post-school outcomes in community experiences/community participation were often very vague (e.g., "responsible citizen") or not present at all. This is an area that transition teams fail to address sufficiently.

Future research should be conducted to address yet unanswered questions. For example, this study might be replicated with a larger, randomly selected sample. In addition, investigations across school districts and states should use the same instrument to collect post-school outcome data, so more direct comparisons can be made. These instruments should include information about students' disabilities and exit documents. Future studies might examine other model programs to verify our findings, or they might compare model programs to typical programs. In the present study, the discrepancies between IEPs and actual experiences did not seem to negatively affect post-school outcomes, which may be because the programs were considered model programs. However, future studies could examine what effect these discrepancies have in a program that does not employ comprehensive transition services and self-determination instruction. Based on the findings of our study, it appears that good transition services may produce good student outcomes, in spite of the quality of the transition component in a student's IEP.

## References

- Baer, R. M., Flexer, R. W., Beck, S., Amstutz, N., Hoffman, L., Brothers, J., et al. (2003). A collaborative followup study on transition service utilization and post-school outcomes. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 26, 7-25.
- Blackorby, J., & Wagner, M. (1996). Longitudinal postschool outcomes of youth with disabilities: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study. *Exceptional Children*, 62, 399-413.
- Benz, M. R., Lindstrom, L., & Yovanoff, P. (2000). Improving graduation and employment outcomes of students with disabilities: Predictive factors and student perspectives. *Exceptional Children*, 66, 509-529.
- Colley, D. A., & Jamison, D. (1998). Post school results for youth with disabilities: Key indicators and policy implications. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 21, 145-160.
- deFur, S., Getzel, E. E., & Kregal, J. (1994). Individual transition plans: A work in progress. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 4, 139-145.
- Everson, J. M., Zhang, D., & Guillory, J. D. (2001). A statewide investigation of individualized transition plans in Louisiana. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 24, 37-49.
- Grigal, M., Test, D. W., Beattie, J., & Wood, W. M. (1997). An evaluation of transition components of individualized education programs. *Exceptional Children*, 63, 357-372.
- Halpern, A. S., Herr, C. M., Wolf, N. K., Doren, B., Johnson, M. D., & Lawson, J. D. (1997). Next S.T.E.P.: Student transition and educational planning. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.
- Halpern, A. S., Yovanoff, P., Doren, B., & Benz, M. R. (1995). Predicting participation in postsecondary education for school leavers with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 62, 151-164.
- Johnson, D. R., Stodden, R. A., Emanuel, E. J., Luecking, R., & Mack, M. (2002). Current challenges facing secondary educa-

- tion and transition services: What research tells us. *Exceptional Children*, 68, 519-531.
- Kohler, P. D. (1996). Taxonomy for transition programming. Champaign: University of Illinois. Retrieved December 19, 2003, from <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~kohlerp/research/taxonomy/Taxonomy.pdf>
- Lawson, S., & Everson, J. (1994). A national review of statements of transition services for students who are deaf-blind. Helen Keller National Center/Technical Assistance Center.
- Marshall, L. H., Martin, J. E., Maxson, L., & Jerman, P. (1997). Choosing employment goals. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- Martin, J. E., Marshall, L. H., Maxson, L., & Jerman, P. (1997). Self-directed IEP. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- McAfee, J. K., & Greenawalt, C. (2001). IDEA, the courts, and the law of transition. *Preventing School Failure*, 45, 102-107.
- Rabren, K., Dunn, C., & Chambers, D. (2002). Predictors of post-high school employment among young adults with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 25, 25-40.
- Sample, P. L. (1998). Postschool outcomes for students with significant emotional disturbance following best-practice transition services. *Behavioral Disorders*, 23, 231-242.
- Shearin, A., Roessler, R., & Schriner, K. (1999). Evaluating the transition component in IEPs of secondary students with disabilities. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 18(2), 22-35.
- Test, D. W. (2000). Implementing the transition mandate: The relationship between programs, personnel, and services. *Special Services in the Schools*, 16, 23-34.

## ~~News You Can Use~~

~~John Gugerty, Column Editor~~

~~The U.S. Department of Education Comprehensive Centers Program awarded its 2005 (FY) Comprehensive Centers grants to assist schools in meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act. Find out more at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/newccp/index.html>~~

~~This program establishes both regional and content centers that provide assistance to States to benefit school districts and schools.~~

~~In 2005, sixteen regional centers were awarded funding to provide frontline assistance to States to help them implement NCLB and other related Federal school improvement programs and help increase State capacity to assist districts and schools meet their student achievement goals.~~

~~In addition, 5 content centers were awarded funding to provide in-depth knowledge, expertise, and analyses to regional centers and the States served by the regional centers. The 5 content centers are:~~

- ~~Center on Accountability and Assessment~~
- ~~Center on Teacher Quality~~
- ~~Center on Instruction~~
- ~~Center on Innovation and Improvement~~
- ~~Center on High Schools~~

~~To find out which regional center serves your area, or to find out which content center serves your needs, visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/newccp/awards.html> for a listing of the comprehensive centers and their websites.~~

~~The comprehensive centers under this program replace the former Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers, the Regional Technology in Education Consortia, the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education, and the Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia.~~